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The Dialectics of Ideology, Social Environment, and Spirituality in I Wayan Pendet's Artistic Practice in Nyuh Kuning, Gianyar, Bali

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the wood sculpture practice of I Wayan Pendet in Nyuh Kuning, Gianyar, Bali, by placing individual ideology as the primary focus of analysis. The study is grounded in the transformation of Balinese sculpture, which has undergone a shift from sacred functions toward aesthetic commodities within the context of tourism and the global art market. It aims to understand how Pendet negotiates the relationship between tradition, modernity, and contemporary consciousness through his creative practice. The research employs a descriptive-interpretive qualitative approach based on the sociology of art. The methods include observation of the artistic production process, in-depth interviews with the artist's family and social environment, and visual analysis of his wood sculptures. The theoretical framework draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital; Howard S. Becker's concept of art worlds; Theodor W. Adorno's critique of the commodification of art; and Arnold Hauser's historical-cultural approach, complemented by an understanding of Balinese Hindu cosmology through the principle of Tri Hita Karana. The findings indicate that Pendet's artistic practice constitutes an ideological praxis that positions art as a space for self-reflection as well as a form of symbolic resistance to the dominance of economic rationality. Although his works participate in the art market, they retain profound spiritual, cosmological, and ecological meanings. The study concludes that Pendet represents a contemporary Balinese artist who is capable of engaging with global perspectives without losing his local cultural roots.

KEYWORDS
Individual Ideology, Balinese Wood Sculpture, Art Commodification, Nyuh Kuning

Introduction

The transformation of wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning, Gianyar, Bali, represents a cultural phenomenon that reflects fundamental changes in the relationship between art, artists, and the social structures within which they operate. Nyuh Kuning, initially known as a space for the production of sculptures rooted in ritual practices, Balinese-Hindu cosmology, and communal value systems, has evolved into an arena of complex negotiation between local traditions and

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the dynamics of global modernity. The processes of modernization, the penetration of cultural tourism, and the expansion of the international art market have shifted the function of sculpture from a sacred medium and symbol of cosmic harmony toward an aesthetic object operating within the logic of commodification. This shift has affected not only the visual forms of artworks but also the ways in which artists understand their creative practices, social positions, and ideological relationships with tradition and the market (Hauser, 1999: 41; Barker, 2013: 97).

The transformation of sculptural practices can no longer be understood merely as individual expression or a continuation of aesthetic tradition, but rather as a social practice situated within a field of power shaped by economic relations, art institutions, and dominant cultural ideologies. Balinese wood sculpture, particularly in Nyuh Kuning, operates within tensions between the sacred and the profane, established conventions and experimentation, and spiritual values and economic rationality. This condition creates an ambivalent situation for local artists, who, on the one hand, are required to adapt to global market preferences while, on the other hand, continuing to bear cultural and spiritual responsibilities toward the traditions that shape their identities (Bourdieu, 1993: 37).

Within these dynamics, the artistic practice of I Wayan Pendet is particularly significant for in-depth examination. Pendet emerges as an artist who not only inherits the aesthetic traditions of Balinese wood sculpture but also critically reflects upon them within the context of contemporary sociocultural change. His works position sculpture not merely as a visual object or aesthetic commodity, but as a medium for negotiating the dialectical relationship between spirituality, local culture, and ecological consciousness. In his practice, Pendet demonstrates a reflective attitude toward modernity while continuing to draw upon Balinese-Hindu cosmological values and respect for nature as ideological foundations for the creation of his works (Becker, 1982: 25).

External influences on Pendet's artistic practice primarily derive from cultural tourism and the mechanisms of the global art market, which shape the field of Balinese sculpture production. The presence of galleries, collectors, curators, and international art-distribution networks has encouraged new standards in artistic production, including visual innovation, the individualization of artistic style, and symbolic legibility for cross-cultural audiences. These pressures have indirectly influenced artists' aesthetic orientations and creative strategies, particularly in their selection of themes, forms, and materials. From the perspective of the sociology of art, this condition demonstrates that artworks are never completely autonomous but are always situated within relationships with the social and economic structures that sustain them (Bourdieu, 1993: 42).

Nevertheless, these external influences do not operate deterministically; rather, they interact in complex ways with internal factors that shape Pendet's creative habitus. These internal factors are rooted in his lived experience within Balinese customary communities, the internalization of Balinese-Hindu values, and a cosmological understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and the transcendent. The ecological consciousness manifested in Pendet's works is not merely an adoption of modern environmental discourse, but rather an expression of Balinese cosmological perspectives that position nature as a sacred entity and a source of spiritual balance. In this context, Pendet's artistic practice can be interpreted as a form of

reverence for nature that simultaneously constitutes a symbolic critique of excessive exploitation and commodification (Hauser, 1999: 88).

The dialectical relationship between external and internal influences shapes Pendet's ideological position as an artist situated between the currents of globalization and locality. He neither completely rejects the market nor fully submits to the logic of commodification. Instead, Pendet develops reflective and symbolic artistic strategies, transforming sculpture into a space for spiritual contemplation and social awareness. From Howard S. Becker's perspective, this practice demonstrates that artworks are products of networks of social relations and systems of values that are continuously negotiated, rather than merely individual products existing in isolation (Becker, 1982: 19).

Academic studies of Balinese wood sculpture to date have predominantly employed formalistic and historical approaches that emphasize style, iconography, and carving techniques. A number of early studies have positioned Balinese sculpture as a product of a relatively stable aesthetic tradition, focusing on the continuity of established conventions and religious symbols within the context of Balinese-Hindu rituals. Such approaches have made important contributions to mapping art history and classifying artistic styles; however, they tend to position artists as passive agents who merely reproduce tradition, without critically examining the social, economic, and ideological dynamics that shape their creative practices (Hauser, 1999: 33).

As cultural studies and the sociology of art have developed, a number of studies have shifted their attention toward the relationship between art and social change. Barker (2013) emphasizes that cultural practices, including visual art, are always situated within networks of meaning, power, and ideology produced through social interaction. In the Balinese context, this approach provides space for understanding sculpture not merely as cultural heritage but also as an arena for negotiating between local tradition and globalization. Nevertheless, such studies generally remain macro-level analyses, focusing more on the impact of tourism and commodification on Balinese art in general, without examining in depth the subjective experiences and creative ideologies of individual artists.

On the other hand, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of the field of cultural production and habitus offer an analytical framework for understanding art as a social practice shaped by relations of power, symbolic capital, and the social positions of artists (Bourdieu, 1993: 42). This approach has been widely employed in studies of Western and modern art; however, its application to Balinese wood sculpture, particularly to local artists whose practices are deeply rooted in traditional spirituality, remains limited. Consequently, internal dimensions such as religious ethics, local cosmology, and ecological consciousness are often marginalized in analyses that place excessive emphasis on the determinative role of economic structures.

Howard S. Becker, through the concept of *art worlds*, emphasizes that artworks are products of collective networks involving artists, institutions, markets, and systems of values that interact with one another (Becker, 1982: 19). This perspective is relevant for examining the transformation of wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning. However, previous studies tend to stop at descriptions of production and distribution networks without connecting them in depth to the

ideological and spiritual dimensions that shape artists' creative responses to commodification and modernity.

In relation to I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice, the available academic studies remain limited and are generally descriptive, focusing on formal aspects, visual themes, and carving techniques. No study has systematically positioned Pendet as a reflective subject who negotiates external influences, such as tourism and the global art market, alongside internal factors, including Balinese cultural habitus, Balinese-Hindu spirituality, and ecological consciousness. The absence of such studies indicates an epistemological gap in the study of contemporary Balinese sculpture, particularly in understanding how local artists construct symbolic strategies amid the forces of globalization (Barker, 2013: 118).

Based on this mapping, the position of this study lies explicitly at the intersection of the sociology of art, visual culture, and Balinese local thought. This research not only extends the discourse on the transformation of wood sculpture but also offers a new perspective by positioning Pendet's works as ideological and cultural practices shaped by the dialectical relationship between external and internal influences. By integrating Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus, Becker's concept of art as social practice, and Balinese-Hindu cosmological values, this study addresses a gap that has remained insufficiently explored in previous research, namely, an understanding of how Balinese wood sculpture functions as a space for negotiating tradition, modernity, spirituality, and ecological consciousness. In doing so, this research strengthens its academic contribution to the study of contemporary Balinese art by presenting an analysis that positions the local artist as an active agent who reflects upon, negotiates, and reinterprets tradition amid the pressures of globalization.

This study seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of how I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice is shaped by the interaction between external social structures, such as tourism, the art market, and cultural globalization, and internal factors, including personal ideology, Balinese cultural habitus, Balinese-Hindu spirituality, and ecological consciousness. By integrating Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus, Howard S. Becker's concept of art as social practice, and perspectives from the sociology of art, this study aims to reveal how Pendet's works represent the transformation of wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning as an ideological and cultural practice rather than merely an aesthetic phenomenon. Through this approach, the research is expected to make theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of contemporary Balinese art, particularly to an understanding of the relationship between tradition, modernity, and spirituality amid the forces of globalization.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive orientation, grounded in the sociology of art paradigm. This approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of creative practice as a social and symbolic process rather than merely as a visual outcome detached from its context. Art is understood as a form of social action that represents the ideologies, cultural values, and historical structures that shape it (Becker, 1982: 25; Bourdieu, 1993: 42).

The research method employed is field research using an art ethnography strategy. Fieldwork was conducted in Nyuh Kuning, Gianyar, as the social setting in which Pendet's artistic practice developed. Participant observation was undertaken to examine the processes of artistic creation, social interactions within the studio, relationships between the artist and his social environment, and the dynamics among tradition, the market, and spirituality. This observation aimed to capture artistic practice as a lived process embedded in the artist's everyday life.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of Pendet's immediate family, particularly his child, as well as local artists, collectors, and art practitioners who are familiar with the aesthetic and ideological characteristics of his work. The interviews focused on creative experiences, ideological perspectives, relationships with tradition and nature, and responses to social change and the art market. This technique enabled the researcher to explore subjective meanings that are not always visible in the visual forms of the artworks (Becker, 1982: 33).

In addition to verbal data, this study collected visual and archival materials, including documentation of artworks, sketches, records of the creative process, and photographs of the studio and working environment. Visual data were analyzed as cultural texts containing symbols, ideologies, and relationships of meaning. All data were subsequently categorized into four principal analytical dimensions: individual ideology, sociocultural context, relationship with nature, and local spirituality.

Data analysis employed symbolic and cultural approaches. Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *habitus*, and *capital* were used to examine Pendet's position within the social structure of the art world and his strategies for negotiating traditional cultural capital with the demands of modern economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993: 37). Becker's concept of *art worlds* was used to explain the social networks that shape the systems of production and distribution of wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning (Becker, 1982: 19). Meanwhile, Hauser's perspective was employed to interpret changes in the forms and meanings of artworks as reflections of transformations in the social structures and ideologies of contemporary Balinese society (Hauser, 1999: 88).

To deepen the ideological and ecological analysis, this study also draws upon cultural ecology and Balinese-Hindu spirituality, particularly the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes the balance of relationships among humans, nature, and God. This approach makes it possible to examine how the reverence for nature and ecological consciousness manifested in Pendet's works are rooted in local cosmology rather than being merely responses to global environmental discourse.

Through this methodology, I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice is analyzed across different temporal dimensions traditional, modern, and contemporary to understand how he reinterprets tradition, negotiates with the market, and develops critical reflections on issues of identity, commodification, and sustainability. Thus, this research methodology is not merely descriptive but also interpretive-critical, positioning the artist as an active social subject within the field of cultural change and the globalization of art.

Result and Discussion

1. Individual Ideology: Art as a Space for Self-Reflection and Subtle Resistance

In I Wayan Pendet's creative practice, individual ideology occupies a central position in directing the entire process of artistic creation. For Pendet, art is not understood merely as a technical activity or simply as a response to market demands, but as a reflective praxis rooted in spiritual and intellectual self-awareness. His statement that "sculpture is not a lifeless object, but a breath that grows from the consciousness of the soul and nature" represents an ideological view in which the artwork becomes a medium of cosmological communication a meeting point between the human subject, the universe, and the *niskala* dimension. Within this framework, the position of the artist shifts from a producer of aesthetic commodities to a symbolic mediator who bridges the material and spiritual worlds.

This perspective demonstrates that Pendet's creative ideology is shaped by a cultural habitus that internalizes Balinese-Hindu values, particularly the concepts of cosmic balance and spiritual ethics. From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, habitus constitutes a structure of dispositions that shapes how individuals think, feel, and act within particular social fields (Bourdieu, 1993: 37). Pendet operates through this habitus within an art field increasingly dominated by the logic of the market and global cultural capital. While some sculptors in Nyuh Kuning orient their practices toward the preferences of tourists and collectors, Pendet maintains symbolic and spiritual dimensions as the core of his aesthetic praxis. This choice reflects an ideological strategy to preserve artistic autonomy within a field increasingly influenced by economic capital.

Pendet's resistance to market dominance is neither confrontational nor explicitly political; rather, it operates through symbolic and aesthetic mechanisms. In Theodor W. Adorno's sense, art can function as a form of "subtle" cultural resistance by refusing to become completely subordinate to the instrumental rationality of capitalism (Adorno, 1991: 32). Pendet articulates such resistance by continuing to create works that circulate within the market while retaining cosmological and spiritual meanings that cannot be entirely reduced to exchange value. His works therefore operate within a productive ambiguity: they participate in commodity circulation while maintaining a symbolic depth that extends beyond the logic of consumption.



Figure 1. Garudeya, by I Wayan Pendet
Source: Author's Personal Documentation, 2021

This individual ideology is concretely manifested in the themes and forms of Pendet's works, such as *Garudeya*. These figures are not represented literally or decoratively but are transformed through fluid, dynamic, and reflective sculptural forms. Pendet rejects rigid boundaries between the sacred and the profane, mythology and contemporary experience. In this context, the artwork functions as a space for ideological contemplation, in which modern awareness of individuality converges with traditional values of spirituality and cosmology. This synthesis demonstrates that Pendet's ideology is not nostalgia for the past but a critical reinterpretation of tradition within a contemporary context (Hauser, 1999: 88).

Thus, individual ideology in Pendet's artistic practice can be understood as a form of cultural praxis that consciously negotiates subjective freedom with spiritual responsibility. Art becomes a space for self-reflection as well as a medium of symbolic resistance to the reduction of artistic meaning within the system of cultural capitalism. Within this framework, Pendet positions himself as an active subject who not only creates forms but also produces meaning and value within an ever-changing social field.

2. Social and Cultural Environment: Collective Habitus and Identity Negotiation

I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice cannot be separated from the social and cultural environment of Nyuh Kuning Village, a community that represents an encounter between strong Balinese traditions and the dynamics of tourism-driven globalization. The village has developed a collective habitus rooted in Balinese-Hindu value systems, in which art, ritual, and social life are organically interconnected. The tradition of *ngayah*, religious ceremonies, and communal life surrounding the temple (*pura*) constitute not merely a social background but also an ethical and symbolic framework that has shaped Pendet's aesthetic orientation from an early stage.

From the perspective of the sociology of art, such a social environment functions as a space for the production of meaning that shapes artistic identity. Bourdieu emphasizes that artistic identity is never formed solely at the individual level but through the internalization of social structures and collective values (Bourdieu, 1993: 42). Pendet internalizes values of harmony, balance, and respect for ancestors as components of his creative habitus. However, this habitus is subsequently challenged by social changes brought about by global tourism and the creative economy.

The entry of the international art market into Nyuh Kuning has shifted patterns of production from collective, ritual-based work toward more individualized and competitive practices oriented toward commercial purposes. In this context, many artists experience an identity tension between market demands and loyalty to tradition. Pendet adopts neither an entirely traditional nor an entirely market-oriented position: he does not reject modernity, but neither does he fully adopt market logic. Instead, he develops a hybrid aesthetic strategy that combines traditional technical discipline with contemporary sensibilities while maintaining Balinese social morality, which emphasizes harmony and balance (Barker, 2013: 114).

Howard S. Becker, through the concept of *art worlds*, emphasizes that artistic practice depends on collective networks of cooperation involving various social actors (Becker, 1982: 19). Pendet recognizes the importance of such networks including galleries, collectors, and art institutions but does not allow these networks to determine his aesthetic orientation completely. His statement that the authenticity of an artwork can emerge only from "a peaceful inner self and a clear mind" indicates that he places moral and spiritual integrity above market calculation. In this respect, Pendet acts as a cultural agent who actively negotiates his identity between two fields: the traditional community and the global economy.

This negotiation of identity makes Pendet's sculptures a medium of cultural communication that represents both the tension and dialogue between locality and globality. His works not only reflect social change in Nyuh Kuning but also offer an alternative model of how local artists can participate in modernity without losing their cultural and spiritual roots. Thus, the social and cultural environment not only shapes the context in which Pendet's works are produced but also becomes an ideological arena in which the values of tradition, modernity, and identity are continuously negotiated.

3. Nature and Ecological Reverence: An Aesthetics of Cosmic Consciousness

The ecological dimension of I Wayan Pendet's works is rooted in Balinese-Hindu cosmology, particularly the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*, which emphasizes harmony among humans, nature, and God. In his artistic practice, Pendet reveres nature not merely as a source of material, such as wood, but as a living spiritual entity. He rejects the use of materials obtained through exploitation or indiscriminate logging and instead prefers wood that has "fallen naturally" or comes from natural remnants that are believed to possess *taksu*.

The representation of nature in Pendet's works is not limited to formal elements such as leaves, roots, or animal bodies but functions as a symbol of cosmic unity. He frequently integrates human figures with the natural textures of wood, allowing its grain and cracks to remain visible as a form of respect for the traces of life inherent in nature itself. This practice corresponds with an ecospiritual perspective in which art serves as a medium for contemplating the relationship between humans and their environment (Kong, 2014).

Within this context, Pendet can be understood as an ecotheological artist who integrates aesthetics, ethics, and ecology within a unified creative consciousness. He does not regard nature as an aesthetic object to be polished and perfected, but as the "body of the cosmos" that must be understood and respected. This perspective enriches the discourse of contemporary Balinese art by introducing the ecological dimension as an integral component of local aesthetic praxis and spirituality.

4. Spirituality and Traditional Conventions: From the Sacred to Contemporary Reflection

Spirituality in I Wayan Pendet's works constitutes one of their most dominant and complex dimensions. He grew up within a rigorous religious tradition in which art functions as part of ritual rather than merely as aesthetic expression. However, as historical circumstances have changed, Pendet has sought to reinterpret traditional conventions (*pakem*) so that they remain relevant to contemporary consciousness. Rather than reproducing religious icons conventionally, he transforms them into reflective symbols containing universal values.

Through the theory of aesthetic deconstruction (Derrida, 1978), Pendet's works can be read as attempts to dismantle established symbolic forms in order to discover new meanings that are more contextually relevant. For example, divine figures that are conventionally represented according to ideal proportions may be presented in expressive, dynamic, and sometimes fragmented forms, demonstrating an effort to actualize spirituality within a changing social context.

According to Mukti Trilila (2020), authentic Balinese spirituality does not exist solely within ritual but also within a creative consciousness that transcends the boundaries of form and function. Pendet practices this understanding through a creative process resembling meditation, in which every stroke of the carving tool becomes a prayer and every form becomes a reflection of the soul. His works embody transcendence within materiality, integrating technique, symbolism, and inner experience into a unified and profound aesthetic.

Through an analysis of these four dimensions, it can be concluded that I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice constitutes a dynamic dialectic between tradition, modernity, and the contemporary.

Tradition provides spiritual and moral foundations; modernity introduces critical awareness of individual freedom and artistic expression; while the contemporary provides a space for reflection and cross-cultural dialogue. Within this dialectic, Pendet develops an artistic practice that is neither trapped in nostalgia for the past nor detached from its spiritual orientation.

The sociology of art demonstrates that Pendet's works are not merely aesthetic representations but also products of social, ideological, and ecological negotiation. He positions himself as a Balinese artist who engages with global perspectives without losing his local roots, creating a form of *glocal art* art rooted in locality while resonating with universal values.

Conclusion

I Wayan Pendet's artistic practice demonstrates that wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning is not merely a form of aesthetic expression but also a space for reflecting on the relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality. From the perspective of the sociology of art, Pendet's works can be understood as social and ideological practices rooted in tradition while continuously adapting to the dynamics of modernity and contemporary consciousness.

The dimension of individual ideology in Pendet's works reveals an understanding of art as a spiritual path and a form of resistance to aesthetic commodification. He transforms sculpture into a medium of meditation and a symbolic dialogue with the *niskala* realm. In the sociocultural dimension, Pendet positions himself as a creative agent who negotiates his identity between collective tradition and the demands of globalization. He maintains the moral and religious values of Balinese society while making use of the freedom of expression offered by the modern era.

Meanwhile, the dimension of nature and ecological reverence demonstrates a distinctive form of cosmic consciousness: nature is not positioned as an object but as a spiritual subject integrated into the creative process. Through his respect for wood as a material and for naturally occurring organic forms, Pendet articulates an ecospiritual perspective rooted in the principle of *Tri Hita Karana*. Spirituality, in turn, constitutes the principal foundation underlying his entire artistic practice. He reinterprets traditional sacred conventions (*pakem*) to generate new meanings that remain relevant to contemporary consciousness, thereby bridging ritual, ethics, and modern reflection.

Within the dialectic between tradition, modernity, and the contemporary, Pendet presents an artistic practice that transcends formal categorization. He is not merely a preserver of tradition but also an aesthetic thinker who employs symbolic language to articulate the spiritual and social consciousness of his time. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that Balinese sculpture, particularly Pendet's work, can be understood as a form of the sociology of spirituality an interaction among individual consciousness, social structures, and the cosmology of nature manifested through visual form.

Thus, I Wayan Pendet's works not only mark the aesthetic transformation of wood sculpture in Nyuh Kuning but also offer a broader paradigm in which local art can function as a space for ideological, ecological, and universal spiritual reflection, communicating across cultural and temporal boundaries.

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